



Reverend Daniel Johnson (3/23/1929 – 3/18/2007)

Our parish lost someone very special today. Rev. Daniel Johnson, the former pastor for 25+ years (1978 - 2004), passed away this morning on March 18, 2007. It was very peaceful and occurred as Mass was being said in his room. How appropriate, since the Mass was what Father Johnson lived for; *and what a life he lived!*

Daniel Willis Johnson was born in Michigan and moved to California with his parents, Oliver and Alice Johnson, as a young boy. His siblings included his brothers Gerald (living) and Frances (now deceased) and his sister, Marion (also deceased). He was raised in Los Angeles, California and attended Nativity Parish. He later went to St. John's Seminary in Camarillo, California and was ordained May 5, 1954, where he served in the Los Angeles Diocese until 1976 before the Diocese of Orange was established. Father Johnson first came to St. Mary's by the Sea on October 16, 1978. The church was originally scheduled for closure because it had just 400 parishioners. He was also told not to expect much and that hardly anyone came to Confession except on Christmas and Easter. Instead, Father Johnson starting "walking the parish" (nearly five times by the time he retired), knocking on doors in the parish neighborhood to invite residents to Mass or religious education classes. He was so successful that registration in the parish grew to nearly 1400 families. He ultimately stayed on here as the Pastor for 25+ years, when he retired on May 9, 2004.

Father Johnson's last few years here at St. Mary's by the Sea were spent in a lot of pain suffering from cancer and Bell's Palsy. After his retirement, he progressively became worse. He truly carried his cross and suffered much for it. Father Johnson used to say that we sometimes don't appreciate the purpose of suffering, even though Catholicism doesn't look upon pain as something evil, but rather as an opportunity for added graces. This being the case, Father Johnson must have received an enormous amount of grace! Some may wonder why someone who was so good and would do anything for anyone was allowed to suffer so much. The answer can be found in this excerpt from an article Father Johnson wrote for the bulletin, titled "*Original Sin*":

One of the real consequences of that first sin is the fact that instinctively we recoil from suffering. The flesh objects and the spirit can easily follow. Consequently, the secular world has no real answer to suffering. Our beautiful Catholic Faith underlines the importance, and yes, the beauty of suffering.

The Divine Babe of Bethlehem grew up to suffer and to die on the cross for each one of us. True love is expressed by the degree that we are willing to endure in behalf of our beloved. This applies to our attempt to return our love to our sovereign God and to others such as family members and friends along with even strangers and enemies.

Such is the story of all of the Saints, starting with the Mother of Sorrows. It will always be so. No cross, no crown. My present affliction is little in comparison to so many others. May these reflections help me with my own warfare between flesh and spirit with the hope that spirit will prevail. May these reflections bring meaning and consolation to others who might not have yet appreciated that their cross is actually “a shadow of His hand outstretched caressingly.”

(From the Pastor’s Desk, by Rev. Daniel Johnson, Article #1)

There are a great many people who will be saddened by Father Johnson’s death. It is hard on those of us left behind; but as he often said, this is what we were put here on earth for... to die and go to heaven. So, instead, *rejoice!* Rejoice that Father’s earthly journey has ended and his eternal one has just begun! *Amen.*

FUNERAL ARRANGEMENTS - (at St. Mary's by the Sea Church)

ROSARY: Friday, 3/23 at 7:00 p.m.

LATIN HIGH FUNERAL MASS: Saturday, 3/24 at 10:00 a.m.

INTERMENT: Holy Cross Cemetery
5835 W. Slauson Avenue, Culver City, CA